/27/

577 The observation with which Im Thurn introduces his discussion of the social life of the Guiana tribes, "The Indian in his natural state, before he feels the influence of white man is of decidedly admirable morality" /cited in English/, is also true in its full extent for the Karaya. This natural morality, completely independent of religious beliefs, makes the existence of a primitive community such as theirs possible. It expresses itself in the [576] scrupulous observation of the commandments of external propriety (1), which does not escape even the casual visitor, but,

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1. Of culture-historical interest and typical of the feeling of propriety of these savages is the manner of their defecation. It occurs as far as possible from the village. A hole is made in the sand. The individual sits on it with outstretched legs, hiding the upper body behind a small mat. The excrement is always carefully buried.

above all, in the exemplary conduct of family life. The 593 solidarity of the family group, which even Martius, rashly 602 generalizing from his observations among demoralized tribes, denied that the Americans possessed at all, has quite truly given this people the moral support which has prevented its decline up to now, despite a century of contact with civilization and, hopefully, will hold it off for a long time to come.

The Karaya family seems, according to its form to be a "mother family." The following facts speak in favor of this:

1. The married man does not eat with his family, but with that of his married sister. Accordingly, he is considered a member of his sister's family.

2. Likewise in the division of the hunting spoils he receives his share, not in his own house, but in that of his sister.

768 3. The children of a widower are cared for by his parents-
589 in-law, while he himself re-enters the ranks of the bachelors.
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836 property and are offered to ships' crews, despite their usually
729 most horrible appearance. Unfortunately, one also sees children
used for the same purpose. Here is clearly shown the dualism in
836 the ethics of the savages, whose moral laws apply only to mem-
729 bers of their own tribe. This view, common to all primitive
571
[186] peoples, cannot therefore change our judgment of the morality
of the Karaya in general. When Castelnau doubts this, saying,
[114] "Ce fait (the stern punishment of a transgression against morals)
est peu d'accord avec les offres qui étaient fait continuellement
a nos gens /this fact is hardly in accord with the offers that
were continually made to our men/" (Hist. du voyage, I, p. 446),
he overlooks the fact that these "offres" concerned not their own,
but foreign women.

855 In spite of the lack of external signs of tenderness, which
are absent among all Indians, the treatment of the children is
very loving throughout.

854 The smaller ones are continually carried about by the
mothers and tended with tireless care, hung with ornaments and
853 painted, etc. They are suckled for an extraordinarily long time.

857 Older children are left entirely to themselves, but in spite of
this demonstrate a natural decency and a modesty of behavior
that the highly-educated offspring of civilized men only all too
858 often lack. It would be unthinkable among the Karaya that chil-
dren be traded to the settlers, as unfortunately still frequently
occurs in other regions of Brazil, especially on the Amazon.
Upon the founding of the Collegio Izabel at Leopoldina, whose
purpose was to train young Indians and settle them later as
colonists, efforts to obtain Karaya children for it were in vain.
Since they once allowed themselves to be misled years ago, and
some were lured away and abducted by force, all the young
people as a rule take flight at the approach of a boat and only with
great difficulty are persuaded to return.

764 The fact that the animal decorations put on the grave poles
532 (cf. p. 63) are marks of the family concerned or of a wider kin
602 grouping indicates the existence of totemism, or clan formation.
To be sure, nothing more precise is known about this, but the
family system discovered among the Arawak by Im Thurn (1) may
also hold for the relationship prevailing among the Karaya.

1. Im Thurn, op. cit., p. 175.

6:Cook M-3,4 (ca. 1900) 1909
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The adulterous
woman is punished by her husband either by flogging or by 684
torturing with fire brands. It is said that she is sometimes even burned to death. The adulterous man is punished by the nearest relatives of his wife. But among these people as, unfortunately, among the higher races, far greater license is allowed the man than the woman.

The Karayá seem to cherish an earnest desire to preserve 593
the integrity of the family, and to guard it against disturbing influences of every kind. Children are reared with strictness 834
and maidenhood is respected; and any transgression of the tribal laws regarding the relations of the sexes is severely punished—even with death, in some cases. But children born 848
out of wedlock are not put to death, as is usually done among savage peoples, but instead, are, like other orphans, reared by the chief of the village as his own children.

The unmarried individuals, who are distinguished from the 589
married by the previously described wristlets and armlets, are not required to support themselves, but are provided for by the community as a whole. The bachelors and widowers live together in a sort of "bachelors' hall"—a separate hut—and participate in the hunting and fishing and other occupations of the tribe only as they feel inclined. But the unmarried women, while, like the single men, not required to work, are not segregated, for they dwell in the huts of their nearest relatives. These females are allowed certain liberties 836
with the unmarried men in order that they may not perturb 548
the married men and their families. They are the village prostitutes. By this arrangement the single men, on the other hand, are kept from endangering family life. Women [927]
taken captive from the enemy in intertribal wars, are retained as prostitutes and semi-slaves. These unhappy females are the common property of all the men, the married as well as the single. Captive female children share the same sad fate; and probably also the children born of captive parents.

We see in these customs, the dualism of the "ethics" of 577
the savage. They are moral, if we may use this term, only when their own well-being is at stake—when it is a question

6:Cook M-3,4 (ca. 1900) 1909
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577 of preserving their own health and the perpetuity of their tribe. With them, the abstaining from or checking of vice, is not a question of conscience, or ethics. They do not regard vice, and evil generally, as wrong in a moral sense, but in a physical and utilitarian sense—because they see that it injures them physically and materially. Right and wrong, virtue and vice mean to them simply material well-being or damage—a question of expediency only. Their perception of moral principles is very dim. They possess the innate ideas of right and wrong, as do all human beings, but seemingly in a blind, instinctive, unintelligent sense only, like a child. [626] Though the taboo, or belief that dire calamities will be visited upon them if they should transgress the will of their divinities, exercises a powerful influence on their conduct.

584 Matrimony is consummated by the man in question making known his wishes to the parents of the maiden of his choice. These in turn ask their daughter if she gives her consent. If 585 she is willing, her affianced delivers to her all his weapons. He then conducts her to the domicile of one of his relatives, as he, of course, has no house of his own. Here they both remain four days as guests of the family. The fifth day, the bride is led back to the hut of her parents, following which, she returns to the bridegroom his weapons. As if to prove that he is competent to care for a family, the groom goes on a few days' hunt, returning when he has secured a quantity of game. The marriage ceremony terminates with a bacchanalian feast, given by the bride's parents, which corresponds to the wedding supper of civilized people. The couple may now live together, and a hut is built for them.

855 The Karayá love their children and treat them kindly, though they are stoical and make no display of their affections. This is true of most of the South American tribes. 854 Very young children are carried about constantly by the mother, and cared for untiringly; and are coated with colored grease and decorated with bright feathers with the same pride and solicitude that the most civilized mothers care 000 for and dress their children. The older children are left to

7:Lipkind E-5 (1938-1939) 1940
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request a ghost to do his killing. In this case the ghost takes the form of a wild beast, usually a leopard. He may request a supernatural either to enter the body of his victim, or to turn loose on the victim his subject animals, particularly the alligator and piranha. The curing shaman sucks out the intrusive supernatural or persuades the ghosts or supernaturals to withhold their attack.

The dichotomy of ghosts and supernaturals is quite clear in Carajá religion. Ghosts are placated by calendrical feasts, run by a hereditary priest. Supernaturals are invited to the masked dances by a shaman who takes complete charge of this cult. There is little relationship between the two cults. There is a momentary appearance of masks during the Big-house Feast of the ghost cult, and an occasional offering to ancestors during the mask cult ceremonies.

What is of special interest is that there are many maleficent supernaturals who cannot be approached at all. There is no technique for handling them except keeping out of their way. The violent ghosts really fall in the same category as far as their relation to humans is concerned. And yet they are chiefly the best men of the Carajá who have fallen in battle against their enemies. In this curious bit of fantasy there seems to be a projection of the fear and aggression which are overtly present in the social life.

In recent years a few Carajá have been able to visit Rio and Belém. They have brought back a somewhat different picture of the extent of the world, a picture with which many Carajá are now familiar. It never intrudes into Carajá life. It is reserved solely for discourse with outsiders. No contradiction is felt because the two conceptions are never brought into the same universe of discourse. I was not able to detect any signs of skepticism. The Carajá is perfectly sure that he has a clear view of the true character of the world. The peculiar beliefs of outsiders are in keeping with their quaint behavior and lack of good breeding. A Carajá will not dispute about such things. He listens to the opinions of others with courtesy and curiosity but cannot be induced to take them seriously. It is much easier to pretend to agree. If you are a missionary, you will give him presents. Later he may have the additional pleasure of expounding your fantastic ideas to his fellows.

Two factors seem to me to contribute largely to the maintainance of this attitude. In the first place, the old way of life is still intact. When a man is able to find full occupation and joy in his activities, it is difficult to get him to doubt the premises on which they are founded. Secondly, every important feature of life is validated by mythical tales which are the Carajá history. The emergence myth, given above in its simplest and shortest variant, is one of many. I can do no more than mention some of the most important here. The full form of the emergence myth gives the names of all the ancestors who emerged and the precise social divisions which they